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THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

Oldfield's new field
Anastasia: end of the line
Aliens' identity parade
Glastonbury zodiac
Madame Blavatsky

104

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THE Unexplained
MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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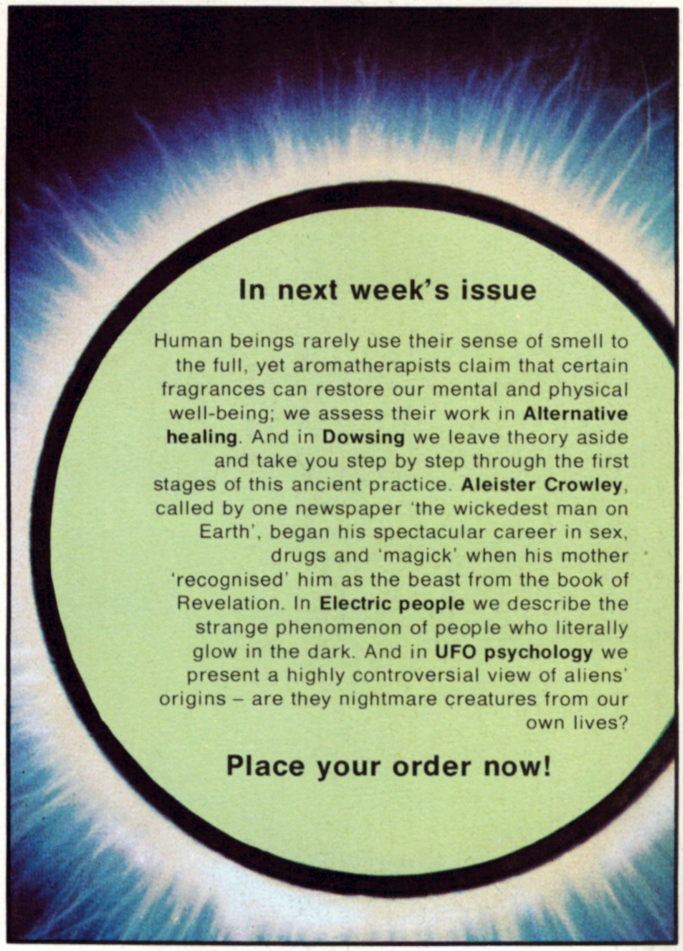
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Blavatsky–larger than life

One of the giants of 19th-century occultism was undoubtedly Madame Blavatsky, the Russian mystic whose 'paranormal' feats were often highly suspect. FRANCIS KING describes her extraordinary life

IN 1850 THE AMERICAN painter A.L. Rawson, who was engaged in leisurely journeyings through the more picturesque countries of the Mediterranean, arrived in Cairo.

He recorded that he was fascinated by the city, its permanent inhabitants, and most of all, the floating population of Bohemian cosmopolitans who had made it their temporary home. Of these last he was particularly intrigued by a certain Madame Blavatsky, who claimed to be a Russian princess, habitually dressed as an Arab, regularly smoked hashish, and took an active interest in the occult. On one occasion, claimed Rawson, she, together with a friend, visited Paulos Metamon, a Coptic (Egyptian Christian) magician, and asked him for instruction, saying 'We are students who have heard of your great learning and skill in magic and wish to learn from you.' To which Paulos Metamon replied: 'I perceive that you are two Feringhees [Europeans] in disguise and I have no doubt that you are in search of knowledge. I look for money.' At this point the interview came to an abrupt end.

Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky ('H.P.B.'), in middle age. Unlike many women who have passed the first flush of youth, H.P.B. often added a great many years to her real age, in an attempt to appear extraordinarily wise. She once told a doctor she was over 100, but in the end she confessed to being 53

There can be no certainty that Rawson's story was not invented by him. The 20-year-old Madame Blavatsky may indeed have been studying magic in Cairo during 1850 and 1851, but she was undoubtedly a woman whose character was such that improbable stories were told about her.

She herself complained about such

Above: Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Henry S. Olcott, who founded the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875 for the propagation of occult and mystical studies. Olcott was a respected lawyer and writer, whose interest in Spiritualism had led him to the Eddy brothers' Vermont farm – where he met H.P.B. From that moment their lives were intertwined, although not, apparently, romantically or sexually. An attorney, who had known Olcott well, said: 'He was as crazy as a loon on . . . Blavatskyism [but] her contemptuous treatment of him was humiliating to behold'

legends in a letter dated March 1875:

> There is not a day that some new story about me does not come out in the papers. Blavatsky was in Africa and went up with Livingstone in a balloon. Blavatsky was in the Sandwich Islands and dined with the cannibal King. Blavatsky converted the Pope of Rome to Spiritualism; she predicted to the Emperor Napoleon III his forthcoming death; she cured the Queen of Spain's facial warts by means of Spiritualism – and so on. . . . They say that I have spent several days at Salt Lake City, and have induced Brigham Young to renounce polygamy.

It is symptomatic of the confusion and controversy that always surrounded Madame Blavatsky that more than one person believed that she herself was responsible for the dissemination of the remarkable stories of which she complained in the above quotation. Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that the facts about Madame Blavatsky's life were quite as extraordinary as any invented legends.

She was born in the Ukraine in 1831, Helena Petrovna von Hahn, the daughter of a Russian army officer of German extraction. In 1849 she married General Blavatsky, the Vice-Governor of Erivan, but she soon ran away to follow a wandering life, at first, according to her cousin Count Witte, as a bareback rider in a circus. Subsequently she contracted a bigamous marriage with the opera singer Metrovitch and there is some reason to believe that she bore him a child.

Her life with Metrovitch was interrupted by many quarrels and temporary estrangements. On one occasion she left him to become an assistant to D.D. Home, undoubtedly the most remarkable Spiritualist medium of his time (see page 330); on another she contracted a trigamous marriage, this time to an anonymous Englishman, whom she rapidly deserted. But the marriage of Madame Blavatsky and Metrovitch ended in July 1871, when they were passengers on the steamship *Eumonia*, which suffered a boiler explosion and then sank. Metrovitch perished; Madame Blavatsky survived, being picked up by a passing freighter and landed in Egypt.

She became a wandering medium, always poor, always hoping for the patronage of the wealthy, and in 1873 she made her way to New York – penniless, wearing a red shirt, and chainsmoking the cigarettes that she dexterously hand-rolled. At first she lived in great poverty, sleeping in a hostel for 'working girls' and earning a precarious living by making artificial flowers.

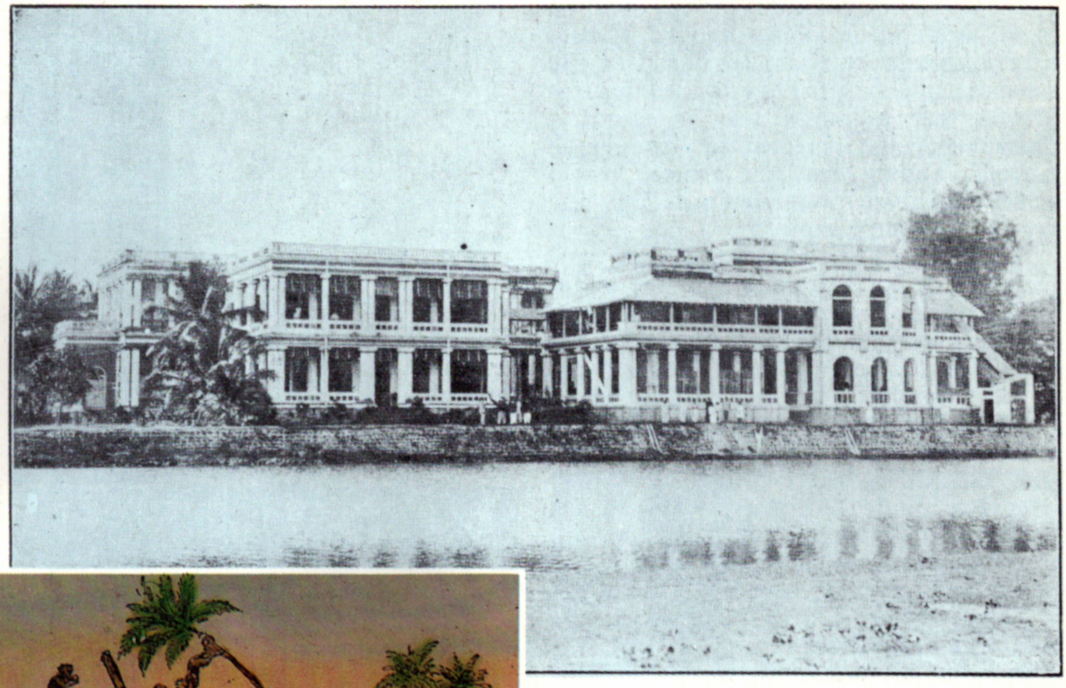
A momentous meeting

She escaped from this dreary existence through her acquaintance with Colonel Henry Olcott, a Spiritualist lawyer and journalist whom she first met at the Vermont farm of the Eddy brothers, the most famous of the many 'materialising mediums' active at the time. The occult wonders that took place at the farm were (if the accounts given by Madame Blavatsky, Colonel Olcott and many others can be believed) truly remarkable. Thus, for example, Madame Blavatsky not only saw the spirit of her dead father materialise in a form so solid that she could touch him, but had a conversation with him in Russian, and was presented by him with a medal that she claimed had been buried with him in his grave. The account she published of this led to great controversy; it was asserted that it was not the Russian practice to bury medals with a soldier's body and that Madame Blavatsky had invented the whole story as a way of publicising her own supposed mediumistic abilities.

Olcott was greatly impressed by what he referred to as 'the spiritual miracles' he saw at the farm. He noted that they increased in

Right: an alleged 'spirit photograph', showing H.P.B. and an 'extra' (the face-like smudge, top left) taken in the 1870s in New York. Madame Blavatsky almost certainly had genuine mediumistic gifts, but this is not necessarily proof of them

Right: the Theosophical Society's headquarters at Adyar, India. H.P.B. and Olcott fled east after the publication of *Isis unveiled* (1877), which raised more questions – including that of plagiarism – than it answered. 'I want to go where no one will know my name,' said Madame; but, never a shrinking violet, she was soon a familiar figure – producing mysterious raps and apports – at even the most respectable Europeans' tea parties



KUTE MOONI & Co
POT AND PAN – THEISTS
CHINA AND GLASS MATCHED AND RIVETED
NO CONNECTION WITH NEXT DOOR
SLUDGE AL
SPIRIT MEDIUM
MESSAGES PROMPTLY PRECIPITATED
MAHATMA GLOW FOR THE COMPLEXION."
ASTRAL BODIES REPAIRED & RE-SOULED.
ASTRAL PLANES AND WISE SAWS KEPT IN STOCK
EVENING PARTIES AND PICNICS ATTENDED

Lantern slide satire, of about 1890, at the expense of the Theosophical Society. Most of the allusions refer to alleged 'miracles' performed by Madame Blavatsky, or through her by one of her 'Masters', Koot Hoomi (the 'Kute Mooni' of the roof). 'Glass and china matched and riveted', for example, refers to a broken cup that H.P.B. 'paranormally' mended. There was some reason to believe, however, that the mended cup was merely substituted through sleight of hand

number and dramatic incident when Madame Blavatsky was present at the Eddys' seances and attributed this to her mediumistic powers. She was, he considered, an altogether remarkable person; he listened with fascination to tales of her occult adventures in Russia and Mongolia and was impressed by her 'mystical blue eyes'. She, in her turn, was attracted by his undoubted kindliness and generosity. He gave her a good deal of financial support in the early years of their friendship, her exact needs being indicated to him by the spirit world, which materialised instructional letters onto his desk or even into his pocket. Somehow the Russian seeress was always about on these occasions, but Olcott's faith in his friend never wavered, in spite of being subjected to many strains.

Perhaps the worst of these followed another illegal marriage by Madame Blavatsky, this time to a young Armenian named Michael Bettanelly. Fortunately the couple soon parted; her husband's sexual habits, claimed the unhappy bride, were quite insufferable – she had agreed to marry him, so she said, only after he had promised that there should be no physical relationship between them. In any case it wasn't really she who had got married, but an evil spirit that had temporarily possessed her. . .

On 7 September 1875 Olcott and Madame Blavatsky – or H.P.B. as her friends now called her – attended a lecture on the subject of the occult significance of the Egyptian pyramids. Olcott was fascinated, particularly by the lecturer's claims that spirits could be evoked to physical appearance by the use of geometrical formulae, and scribbled a note to his friend – 'Should not a society be established for the study of these things?' Only 13 days later Madame Blavatsky was describing the new society to a correspondent:

> Olcott is now organizing the Theosophical Society in New York. [The noun 'theosophy', literally meaning 'divine wisdom', was a 17th-century synonym for mystical religion. Blavatsky and Olcott's adoption of it for the Spiritualistic system they taught was totally unjustified and has led to much confusion.] It will be composed of learned occultists . . . and of passionate antiquaries and Egyptologists generally. We want to make an experimental comparison between Spiritualism and the magic of the ancients by following literally the instructions of the old Cabbalahs . . . . I have for many years been studying Hermetic philosophy in theory and practice, and am every day coming to the conclusion that Spiritualism in its physical manifestations is nothing but . . . the astral, or starry, light of Paracelsus. . . .

The 'experimental comparisons' mentioned

above were somewhat odd. On one occasion these early Theosophists applied a mild electric current to a cat, causing it to rise some way into the air. They decided that this proved that levitation was an electrical phenomenon and increased the power of the current, hoping that the animal would achieve complete weightlessness, but 'the poor cat suddenly expired'.

With its members engaging in such tomfoolery it is not surprising that the infant Theosophical Society failed to attract new members and that two years after its foundation, it had almost expired. It was restored to life, however, by the publication of Madame Blavatsky's *Isis unveiled* (1877), a study of the occult that, so Olcott claimed, was inspired by astral visions. He wrote: 'Her pen would be flying . . . when she would suddenly stop, look into space with the vacant eye of the clairvoyant seer . . . and begin copying on her paper what she saw.'

Blavatsky unveiled

Whatever the source of the text of *Isis unveiled* there is no doubt that it is, at first sight, impressive. It gives the impression that its author was a woman of immense learning and wisdom, the possessor of a secret knowledge known only to a few. In reality Madame Blavatsky's learning was not as profound as it sounds. W.E. Coleman, an American scholar, found that no less than 2000 passages in *Isis unveiled* were plagiarised from other books and argued that readers of the book had been misled into thinking its author was: '. . . possessed of vast erudition; while the fact is her reading was very limited, and her ignorance was profound in all branches of knowledge.'

In spite of the extent and verbosity of *Isis unveiled* – Madame Blavatsky never used one word when she could use six, never wrote a sentence when she could write a paragraph – the basic doctrines taught in the book were simple enough.

First, it was asserted that the physical and mental phenomena of the Spiritualists' seance rooms, from table turning to raps and the materialisation of departed spirits, had all been known to the great philosophers and religious teachers of the ancient world. Many of these latter, so it was claimed, had themselves been powerful mediums, in touch with far more 'advanced spirits' than those contacted by modern Spiritualists. Through studying the lives and teachings of these ancient seers it would become possible for 19th-century mediums to receive 'spiritual communications' of a higher nature than were normally available to them.

Secondly, it was asserted that the old alchemical and magical treatises, seeming gibberish to modern readers, revealed under a veil of symbolism many scientific and spiritual truths of tremendous significance. Those possessed of the 'keys' of initiated understanding – and the pages of *Isis unveiled* strongly hinted that Madame Blavatsky was possessed of these keys – could unlock the doors that led to a treasure house of wisdom, beauty and truth.

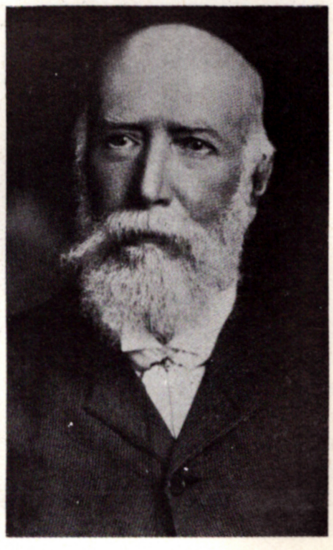
Above: the Mahatma (Master) Koot Hoomi, one of the 'immortal supermen' who, Madame Blavatsky claimed, acted as mentor to those of advanced spiritual status, such as herself. Another was the Mahatma Morya (left). Followers of H.P.B. eagerly dispatched letters to these Masters – via Madame – and received replies oddly reminiscent of H.P.B's style and handwriting. But even so, the Mahatma letters persuaded many to become Theosophists, including the journalist A.P. Sinnett (below), whose *Esoteric Buddhism* and *The occult world* rapidly became standard Theosophical texts

Thirdly, it was strongly suggested, although never openly stated, that Madame Blavatsky had been entrusted by some secret organisation of spiritual supermen with the task of reviving the old spiritual truths in the industrial world of the 19th century.

Isis unveiled was a modest success and there was a revival of public interest in Madame Blavatsky and her Theosophical Society.

In the following year D.D. Home published a book in which he told a number of hostile and unpleasant stories about Madame Blavatsky. These so upset her and Olcott that they decided to go to India; 'I want to go,' she wrote, 'where no one will know my name.'

In India the Theosophical Society met with considerable success, making many converts among both English expatriates and native Indians. The most important of the former was A.P. Sinnett, a well-known journalist, who was converted to Theosophy



by a number of supposedly miraculous, but very probably fraudulent, phenomena produced by Madame Blavatsky. Among these was the 'apport' of a missing cup and saucer at a picnic; supposedly this had been magically 'precipitated' by the Mahatmas (or Masters), immortal supermen, living in the Himalayas, whose pupil and servant Madame Blavatsky claimed to be.

Not surprisingly, some of the new Theosophists desired to be put in touch with the Mahatmas and be accepted as their pupils. Sinnett decided to write them a letter, did so, and asked Madame Blavatsky to pass it on to them. A week or so later he received a reply, which mysteriously appeared on his desk, from someone who claimed to be 'the Mahatma Koot Hoomi'. A lengthy exchange of letters followed; Sinnett would write out his questions on a wide variety of occult subjects – the occult nature of the Moon, spiritual evolution, the nature of the Masters themselves, the lost continent of Atlantis and so on – send them (always via H.P.B.) to the Mahatmas and in due course receive detailed replies.

On the basis of the information given in these 'Mahatma letters' Sinnett wrote *Esoteric Buddhism*, a lengthy book outlining a complex occult system that involved spiritual evolution through reincarnation, a hierarchy of Masters, 'the secret government of the world', and a secret wisdom available only to a few.

Esoteric Buddhism and *The occult world*, another book by Sinnett, this one largely concerned with 'miraculous' phenomena of the teacup variety, sold well and branches of the Theosophical Society came into existence in England, France and other European countries.

Left: Mahatma Gandhi, who, as a young lawyer working in East Africa, was heavily influenced by Theosophy

Further reading

'Ephesian', *The mysterious Madame*, Bodley Head 1931

Marion Meade, *Madame Blavatsky: the woman behind the myth*, Putnam (New York) 1980

John Symonds, *In the astral light*, Panther 1965

In 1884 Blavatsky and Olcott journeyed to Europe to visit their new disciples. In London they called upon the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) and, along with Indian Theosophists, gave evidence of the occult wonders they had witnessed. The SPR decided to send out an investigator to India and prepare a report upon the supposed miracles.

The report, when it came, was devastating. The 'miracles', it was asserted, were fraudulent, the product of clever conjuring tricks by Madame Blavatsky and some of her closest associates; the Mahatma letters were forged by Madame Blavatsky; their mysterious 'precipitation' was caused by their being dropped through gaps in the ceiling

Right: Mrs Annie Besant, who became president of the Theosophical Society after Colonel Olcott's death in 1907, with Jiddu Krishnamurti whom she hailed as the Hindu Messiah. Mrs Besant made India her home and dedicated her life to a quite different concept of Theosophy from that taught by Madame Blavatsky. In 1927 she accompanied Krishnamurti on a long tour abroad; on their return to India he announced 'I have seen Buddha . . . I am Buddha.' But in 1929 he resigned from the society, denying his 'Messiahship'. He has continued to be revered as a holy man, especially in the West

rafters; as for Madame Blavatsky herself:

> . . . we regard her neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious and interesting impostors of history.

Madame Blavatsky spent most of the few remaining years of her life in England, lecturing to her still numerous followers, writing copious occult articles, essays, explanations and, above all, her enormous book *The secret doctrine*, a vast treatise on, and elaboration of, the system outlined in Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*.

She died on 8 May 1891 and was cremated at Woking.

The society she founded has survived, although it has suffered from schisms, and still flourishes. There have been, and are, many thousands who have rejected the SPR's adverse report, or considered it irrelevant, and sought to come to a better understanding of the mysteries of existence through a study of Madame Blavatsky's later writings.

Anastasia: riches to rags

Is the sole surviving member of the Imperial family of Russia living quietly in an American university town? This is the question posed by FRANK SMYTH as he presents the tangled evidence in the Anastasia case

THE NURSES at the Dalldorf Insane Asylum, one of Berlin's principal mental hospitals, were deeply sympathetic to the unidentified young woman who had been brought there six weeks after attempting suicide in the city's Landwehr Canal in February 1920. And indeed they had every reason to be.

The immersion in the icy water had not helped her already weak lungs, which haemorrhaged slightly and tended towards pleurisy, and she was chronically anaemic. Furthermore, she showed signs of having suffered severe violence at some time in her unknown past: above her right ear was a groove in the skull, resembling the scar likely to be made by a bullet 'creasing' the bone, and her jaws had been damaged – some of the teeth knocked out, some loosened – as if by beating. The arch and instep of one foot bore triangular scars, as if they had been pierced by a sharp instrument.

The authorities who questioned the blue-eyed, dark-haired girl during her two-year stay at Dalldorf were convinced that she was a Russian refugee, and that fear of repatriation kept her silent. For she either could not or would not answer questions about her past, which was why she had been transferred from the hospital to the asylum. Instead she lay in her bed, eating little and paying scant attention to those around her.

Some of her nurses could, if they had chosen, shed a glimmer of light on the mystery woman, for though she spoke fluent German, she was heard muttering in Russian in her sleep from time to time. Furthermore, she had confided to some of them that she was the Grand Duchess Anastasia who, according to official reports, had been executed with her father the Tsar and the rest of her immediate family in the summer of 1918.

But it was one of her fellow patients who first brought her to the notice of the outside world as a possible member of the Imperial Romanovs. In March 1922 Clara Peuthert,

Lilli Palmer in the film *Is Anna Anderson Anastasia?* (below), made in Germany, and Ingrid Bergman in *Anastasia* (bottom), made in Hollywood. Both came out in the 1950s, when interest in Anna Anderson's claim to be the Grand Duchess Anastasia was at its peak. She was presumed killed with her family in 1918

Anna Anderson as she began her sheltered years as the wife of the American professor Dr John Manahan (standing). Gleb Botkin, son of Tsar Nicholas II's doctor and staunch supporter of Anna's right to the name of Anastasia, was a witness at the wedding in 1967. By then, Anna had been through nearly 50 years of publicity and controversy – with no resolution to the court case deliberating whether she was really the last of the Imperial Romanovs of Russia

who had lived in Moscow before the revolution, was discharged from Dalldorf. Soon after, she told a former White Russian officer that she thought she had recognised the Grand Duchess Tatiana, Anastasia's older sister, among the inmates of the mental hospital. Apparently she had not spoken to the patient calling herself Anastasia.

As a result of this conversation, a former police officer from Russian Poland, Baron Arthur von Kleist, visited the mystery woman and spent two months gaining her confidence. He then secured her release and took her into his own home. According to him, she told him – in a confidence that he quickly broke – that she was Anastasia. She recounted that she had made her escape from Russia under the protection of a soldier by the name of Alexander Tschaikowsky, who had later been killed. In a mood of black despair, she had made her own way to Berlin where she had tried to kill herself.

By July 1922 Baron von Kleist had broken the news – and 'Anastasia' entered a glare of publicity that was to surround her for the next half century. It is worthy of note that, while privately asserting her Romanov identity, the woman last known as Anna Manahan has never personally attempted to persuade the outside world of it. Her 'case' has always been in the hands of others. In fact, her reaction to von Kleist's revelation was to run away from his care, and for the next five years she was in and out of hospitals – and the world's press.

One of the dozens of people who visited Anastasia – among them members of the Romanov clan – was Tatiana Botkin, daughter of the Tsar's doctor who had presumably perished with the Imperial family. Tatiana Botkin arrived determined to expose the 'impostor'. Instead, despite the nameless woman's gaunt appearance, she immediately recognised her as Anastasia.

The German authorities seemed also to be convinced. In 1926 'Anastasia' was advised to go to Switzerland for medical reasons, and the German Foreign Ministry instructed the Berlin Aliens Office to issue her with an identity card, although bureaucratically she did not exist, alluding to 'special reasons' for doing so. A senior official at the Prussian Home Office said that '. . . on the basis of police enquiries so far, the unknown woman is in all probability one and the same as the Tsar's daughter Anastasia.'

Sinister opposition

In 1925 the Tsar's mother, Dowager Empress Marie, who was living in exile at the Danish court, asked her brother Prince Valdemar of Denmark to look into the affair. He instructed Herluf Zahle, then Danish ambassador in Berlin as well as the president of the League of Nations, to conduct enquiries. After a time Zahle also became convinced that 'Anastasia' was genuine, but he found the German relatives – the Tsarina's side of the family – obstructive. Grand Duke Andrei, a senior Romanov, a trained jurist and the Tsar's cousin, also undertook an investigation. He met with the same opposition, so much so that he began to think there was something sinister behind it. Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig of Hesse, the Tsarina's brother, had told Andrei that his enquiries could be 'perilous', which prompted Andrei to write in one of his letters: '. . . it is plain to see that "they" fear something and are very disturbed, as if the investigation could uncover something embarrassing and even dangerous for them. . . .'

Certainly the Grand Duke of Hesse made a number of fumbling attempts to discredit the claimant. At the same time, one of the other cousins, Duke George of Leuchtenberg, invited her to stay at his castle in Upper Bavaria, which she did. Then in 1928 she went to New York as the guest of Princess Xenia Georgievna, the real Anastasia's second cousin. There she changed her name to Anna Anderson to escape the press ballyhoo. There she also became involved in an ill-advised court action under the irresponsible guidance of Gleb Botkin, son of the Tsar's doctor.

The repercussions sent Anna to Germany

again in 1931 and to another mental hospital. Befriended by a Romanov cousin while there, she spent the next 13 years in relative peace as the guest of many of Europe's aristocracy.

Meanwhile, a legal wrangle began in earnest in 1933. It started over who exactly was to get the Tsar's legendary fortune, allegedly distributed among banks in various countries. The only money ever actually discovered was in Germany – and was far from a fortune. But in 1937 the courts ruled that it could be divided among a named number of the Tsar's near relatives. One of the legal documents mentioned that Anastasia was 'deceased', and, scrupulously fair, the bank holding the money wrote to Anna Anderson to warn her. Her lawyers, recommended and provided by friends, found her a reluctant client. But they entered the long – and

Above: Serge Lifar (right), world-famous ballet dancer, choreographer and writer, testified in the Anastasia court case in 1958

Left: Marie, Dowager Empress of Russia and grandmother of the real Anastasia. She instituted an investigation of Anna Anderson but never saw the claimant in person

Below: the Grand Duke of Hesse, one of the German relations of the Romanovs. He refused to consider the possibility that Anna Anderson was his cousin

ultimately inconclusive – fight as a way to establish her legal identity more than for the inheritance.

During the Second World War Anna Anderson was trapped in Soviet Russia, undoubtedly a nightmare experience if she was who she claimed to be. After the war she became increasingly eccentric, settling as a hermit in the Black Forest in a hut bought for her, and living with an elderly female companion, a host of cats, and four ferocious wolfhounds.

But the spotlight was still on her. A German feature film, starring Lilli Palmer and dealing with 'Anastasia's' fight for recognition, was followed by the glittering Hollywood version starring Ingrid Bergman. The world's press literally beat a path through the woods to her humble door, while the fresh publicity brought a new legal turn. The Berlin Court of Appeal, on turning down her lawyers' appeal for her legal recognition, suggested that she sue those who had 'presumed' the death of Anastasia. The late Lord Mountbatten, his sister Princess Andrew of Greece – mother of Prince Philip – and Queen Louise of Sweden were among the likely defendants, but instead the choice fell on two German cousins from the line of Hesse. From 1957 until 1970 the case was almost continuously before the German courts and, as the journalists Anthony Summers and Tom Mangold remarked in their book *The file on the Tsar*: 'Given that there is supposedly no Romanov fortune at stake, the Tsar's relatives in exile went to extraordinary lengths to smother the Anastasia affair.'

One reason for this could well be a collective sense of guilt by royal relatives who made little if any attempt to rescue the Imperial family through diplomatic means. For example, documents exist showing that King George V quashed a tentative British plan to save his cousin Nicholas – perhaps out of concern that his position would be in

jeopardy if he championed the Tsar.

But another reason for the opposition to 'Anastasia's' claims, particularly from the Germans, may well tell in her favour. While gravely ill in hospital in 1926, Anna implored a visitor, the widow of a German dignitary, to bring the Grand Duke of Hesse – her 'Uncle Ernie' as she called him – to her bedside. She said she had last seen him 'in the war, with us, at home'. To the visitor and others present this seemed impossible, for Russia and Germany had been at war and Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig had been an active German general. When this woman did visit the Grand Duke and did mention this conversation, he immediately turned cold and told her that he could not become involved. Later, despite scepticism amounting almost to scorn, 'Anastasia' made the claim again, to Herluf Zahle. 'Uncle Ernie' she said, had paid a secret visit to the Tsar in 1916 to attempt to arrange a separate peace between Russia and Germany.

Vindication for Anna Anderson came from a highly respectable source in 1953 when Crown Princess Cecile, the Kaiser's daughter-in-law, swore a formal deposition:

> If the view is still held today that such a visit never took place, I can assert from personal knowledge – the source is my late father-in-law – that this visit was already known in our circles at the time. In my opinion [Anna] showed by her statement, which I only heard about much later, strong evidence at least of her intimate knowledge of the high politics and of the most secret dealings of the Imperial family.

Since then other depositions and documents have come to light making the secret trip almost a certainty. In view of this, the opposition of the Grand Duke and many of his close German family, who always hoped for a restoration of the German monarchy, is understandable. Proof of such an act would have been a sword in the hands of German republicans, though as Summers and Mangold have said, it seems odd that they should still oppose Anna Anderson even after their hopes must have died.

Top: the house in the Bavarian Black Forest where Anna Anderson sought to escape the glare of publicity

Above: Crown Princess Cecile of Germany, whose father-in-law was Kaiser Wilhelm II, another Romanov cousin. She gave testimony favourable to Anna Anderson in 1923

Further reading

Victor Alexandrov, *The end of the Romanovs*, Hutchinson 1966

Roland Krug von Nidda, *I, Anastasia*, Michael Joseph 1959

John F. O'Conor, *The Sokolov investigations*, Souvenir Press 1972

In 1918 the real Anastasia was described as 'plump and pretty'. By 1922 the claimant to her name had undergone great hardship and was almost skeletal. Yet despite her physical change, many members of her 'family' recognised her as their supposedly dead 'kin'. Grand Duke Andrei, for instance, was quite convinced. The Tsar's sister Olga, who saw the real Anastasia only rarely, was partially convinced but could never make up her mind, while Prince Sigismund of Prussia, her companion in childhood, knew who she was without having seen her. When 'Anastasia' first surfaced, Sigismund was in central America, so he sent the claimant a list of personal questions that only the real Anastasia could answer correctly. Anna answered all of them accurately.

The court files amount to almost 8000 foolscap pages – but no decision as to Anastasia's identity has been made. Anna, now in her eighties and living in a protected world as the wife of Dr John Manahan, is personally uninvolved. She ceased to care long ago and in 1977 – weary of the never-ending publicity – she wrote a personal letter to a press agency formally declaring that she was closing the case for good. And the question of whether she is the real Anastasia remains a puzzle of history.

The good, the bad and the ugly

The creatures described in close encounter reports come in a confusing variety of shapes and sizes. What are we to make of them? ALVIN LAWSON analyses the reports – and comes up with a startling new theory about the origin of alien beings

THE CLASSIC PICTURE of an alien being is of a small, spindly creature with a large head and bulbous eyes, but often no other visible facial features, dressed in a one-piece grey suit without buttons or zips. The startling similarity of descriptions of aliens in many close encounter reports has led to speculation that all UFOs originate in one place. But for every report of these foetus-like aliens, there is one of creatures of a completely different kind – sometimes stiffly moving, like robots, sometimes indistinguishable from human beings, sometimes green and gnome-like.

What can ufology make of this fascinating but bewildering array of descriptions of supposed alien life forms? Are we to suppose that the Earth is being bombarded with spacecraft from many alien cultures, all conducting reconnaissance missions, or do the pilots of the alien craft have some obscure purpose in disguising themselves now in one form, now in another? Or will we be forced to make a more radical hypothesis?

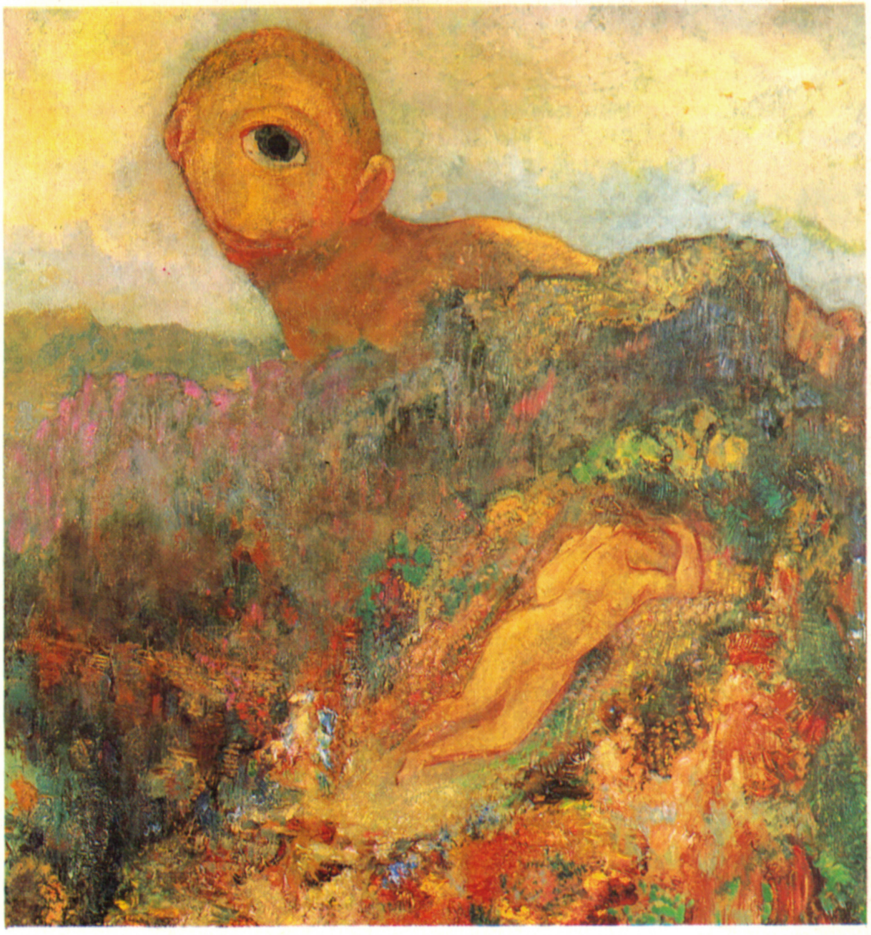
Let us begin by creating a tool for analysing the wealth of reports of close encounters of the third kind – those UFO reports that involve aliens. Some kind of classification system will be useful; let us start with those aliens that take the same basic form as human beings, and are immediately identified as such by the witnesses. They are generally dressed in one-piece suits, and move and speak normally. Their average height, in all the reports, is between 5 and 7 feet (1.5 and 2.1 metres). These are 'human entities'.

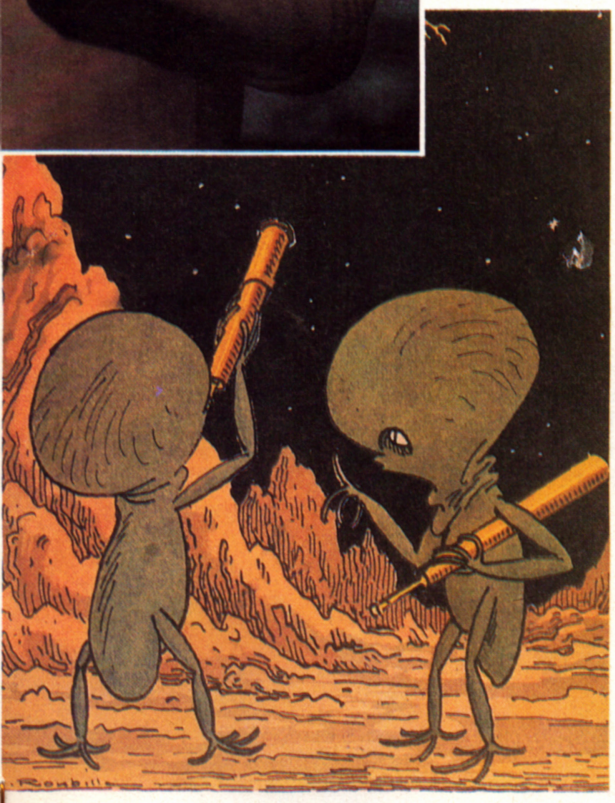
Perhaps the most commonly reported aliens are the humanoids. They resemble humans, but witnesses report clear anatomical differences. They often have disproportionally large heads, pallid skins, underdeveloped facial features, and hairless bodies – giving them an appearance reminiscent of human foetuses. The single feature most often reported is their exceptionally large eyes, sometimes described as unblinking, or having vertical pupils. They are small, with an average height of between 3 and $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet (90 centimetres and 1.7 metres). Unlike human entities, they generally communicate not through normal speech, but telepathically; but like them, humanoid entities are generally dressed in one-piece, close-fitting suits, usually of silver or grey, although space-suits are also sometimes reported.

Somewhat rarer are 'animal entities'. They are characterised by distinctly mammalian, reptilian, fishlike or other features, including fur, claws, a tail, scales or similarly strange skin texture, pointed ears, a snout, enlarged teeth, and non-human eyes. Their heights range from 6 to 8 feet (1.8 to 2.4 metres). Most are ape-like in appearance, and walk on two legs. Their method of communication ranges from animal cries to telepathy.

Another form of alien is the 'robot entity'. Robots seem to be made of metallic or other artificial body materials, and often move in a jerky, stiff or otherwise unnatural manner. Glowing eyes are often reported; so is the robots' ability to float, or to make witnesses float. Their shape varies from bipedal to huge machines; their height can be anything between 6 inches and 20 feet (15 centimetres and 6 metres). They often wear padded space-suits with bubble-dome headgear. Their method of communication varies from a flat metallic voice to telepathy.

Other types of alien exhibit a variety of strange characteristics – they are the 'exotic





Alvin Lawson has proposed a sixfold classification of alien beings reported in close encounter cases. Mr Spock (above left), from the planet Vulcan, is an example of Lawson's humanoid category familiar from television's *Star Trek*. The classification can also be applied to creatures from before the start of the modern UFO era in 1947. In this illustration from a 1918 issue of the French magazine *La Baionnette* (left) lunar entities – again, clearly belonging to Lawson's humanoid class – conjecture that Earth wars are a device to prevent the planet cooling. The Cyclops of Greek legend (far left) – in a painting by Odilon Redon (1840–1916) – is a member of Lawson's 'exotic class'; and the Greek river god Achelous (above) – seen here with Herakles – is an example of the 'apparitional entity'; he could change his shape at will

entities'. They may have grotesquely exaggerated animal or human features; they may combine human characteristics with non-animal ones – humans with robot arms, for instance. Most exotic entities are bipeds; but some of them combine the characteristics of two or more of the other categories. They range in height from 1 to 10 feet (30 centimetres to 3 metres). They may move like humans or animals, or like robots, or float; they often communicate telepathically, rather than by ordinary means..

The final category is also the most puzzling. It consists of 'apparitional entities' – aliens that share many of the characteristics of ghosts. They may materialise or dematerialise, change form, manifest themselves selectively to witnesses, or move matter, including people,. about at will. Their average height is 5 to 6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 metres); they often float rather than walk, and they generally communicate by telepathy. Here again, they most often appear dressed in one-piece suits.

Let us use this system of classification to analyse the close encounter cases described in Webb's *1973 – year of the humanoids*. Of a total of 66 cases, 16 were humanoids, 12 robots, 10 human, 8 animal, 7 exotic, 5 apparitional – and 8 were impossible to categorise because the descriptions were so vague.

It seems we have a working classification system. But is there an additional significance in the fact that *all* reported aliens appear to fall into one of six well-defined groups?

'Intelligent scum'

Some scientists have speculated about the existence of alien creatures that are so unusual that it would be impossible to classify them under the six-category system. For example, in his novel *The black cloud*, astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle describes a vast, intelligent cloud that 'lives' in interstellar space, complete with molecular heart system, brain and other necessary organs. It feeds on raw energy and its central nervous system functions via radio waves. And Ronald Bracewell writes of an 'intelligent scum', an enormous living civilisation that controls its environment through evolutionary specialisation. But in fact, such creatures are rarely, if ever, described in genuine close encounter reports.

Can the six-class categorisation be applied to any other phenomena, real or imaginary? The most well-established single pattern in the groups described above has to do with

entity clothing, typically a seamless, one-piece outfit that covers the body except for the head. This is distinctly similar to the clothing generally worn by brownies, traditional folklore figures. Another interesting parallel is provided by the many reports of instrument-carrying aliens and similar reports of elves from folk tradition. And a close examination of folk tradition shows that folk creatures fit the six-class categorisation neatly. Giants, for example, are human entities; pookas, gnomes and pixies are humanoid; kelpies are animal; stocks, wooden dolls substituted by fairies for kidnapped babies, are robotic; the fachan, a bizarre creature with one eye, one hand emerging from his chest, and one leg, is exotic; and fairies, like demons and divinities, are 'shape shifters', or apparitional.

The images of traditional Christianity fall into the same categories. At the centre is the human Christ. The cherubim and seraphim, ageless, sexless beings, are humanoid. The key symbol of the Garden of Eden is the serpent – an animal entity. Adam is the father of all 'robots' – inert matter infused by God with life, consciousness and sensibility. Devils and tempters show horrific bodily distortion – and fall into the exotic class; and angels, with their capacity for abruptly appearing and disappearing, are apparitional. And so on. The classification can be extended to the Greek gods, demonology, science fiction, many of the works of Shakespeare and Lewis Carroll – and even the characters of the *Wizard of Oz*.

It seems that our system of classification is perhaps more than merely a useful tool for analysis – could it be that it is actually a set of archetypes, deeply rooted in the subconscious, on which the mind draws when it is subjected to unusual stimuli?

Evidence that this may be the correct interpretation comes from a series of hypnosis experiments conducted by Dr W.C. McCall, John DeHerrerra and the author at Anaheim Memorial Hospital, California, in 1977 (see page 1548). In these experiments, a number of subjects were hypnotised and asked questions about an imaginary UFO 'abduction'. The results were compared with 'real' cases – and, startlingly, the descriptions, in particular of the aliens involved, were closely similar. Here is part of an 'imaginary' description of an abduction:

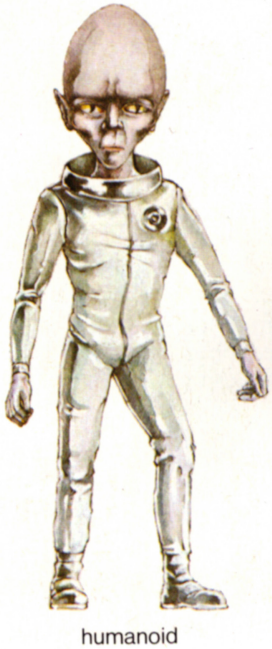
> They [the aliens] seem to be humanoid in form. They have round heads that are much larger than . . . humans. . . . They don't really have fingers. They seem to be kind of webbed. . . . I can't see any legs, or feet, because they're . . . what looks like possibly a . . . an article of clothing goes right to the floor. . . . Costume is . . . more purplish than blue in color. Seems to be all one . . . all made in one piece. There don't seem to be any seams on the costume. . . . They stand about four feet, two inches [1.2 metres] tall. Maybe a little taller . . . .

It is a typical description of the humanoid type. This seems to be powerful evidence that the imagery of close encounters of the third kind is stored in the collective unconscious – that it is, in Jungian terms, archetypal (see page 426).

An analysis of hallucinations and the images remembered from near-death experiences shows similar parallels with reports of close encounters of the third kind. Do all these similarities prove that close encounter cases are illusory? Not necessarily,

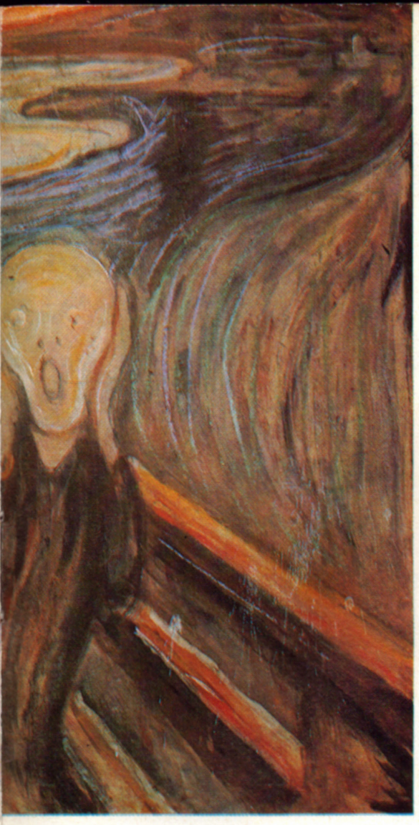
Below left: a detail of a chained devil from a stained glass window in the St Lawrence chapel of Strasbourg Cathedral, France. With its goatish beard, cow's horns, ass's ears and bird's talons, this devil exhibits the characteristics of Lawson's 'exotic' category. Interestingly, other aspects of Christian imagery show equally striking parallels with reports of alien creatures

human



humanoid

animal



Above: *The scream*, by the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863–1944), which, according to the painter, represents the 'primal scream of nature'. On another level, however, Munch has unconsciously reproduced the archetype of the typical humanoid of Lawson's categorisation. This 16th-century stained glass window (right) shows Adam and Eve – whom Lawson sees as examples of 'robots'

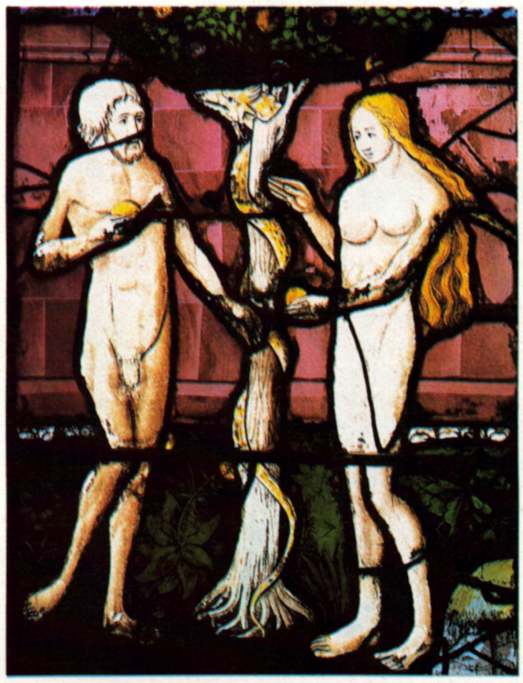
for four reasons. First, many abduction and other close encounter reports involve multiple witnesses, and it seems unlikely that multiple hallucinations lasting for several hours occur with significant frequency; second, there are reported physiological, psychological and physical effects associated with abduction experiences that – where authenticated – suggest that *something* happened. Third, hallucinating patients and those who have gone through near-death experiences are generally convinced only by extremely vivid experiences; but most close encounter witnesses are convinced very early of the 'reality' of the event – however unlikely they know it to be. Fourth, while the triggering mechanism or stimulus for hallucinations and near-death experiences can apparently be determined with some accuracy, the stimulus for 'real' close encounter experiences continues to be one of the major unknowns of ufology. No one knows what it is that makes a particular person, at a particular place and time, likely to experience a close encounter.

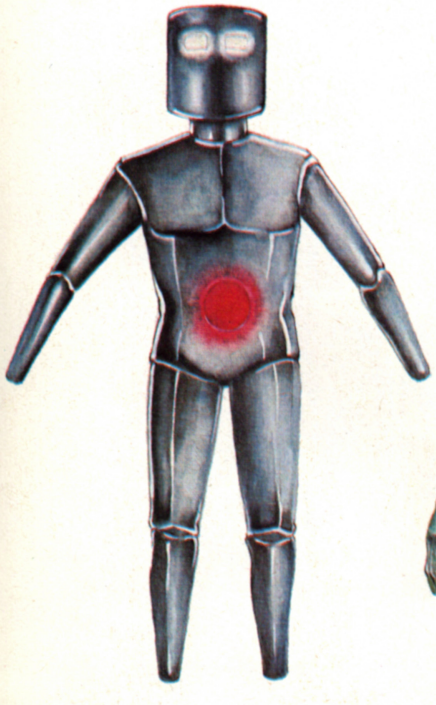
Although none of these arguments in itself provides positive proof, taken together they make it seem likely that close encounter reports are elicited by a real stimulus; but, as the French ufologist Claud Rifat has speculated,

> UFO reports . . . do not give us any indication of the true stimulus which elicited the report; they give us only what the subject fancies about the nature of a UFO . . . CE IIIs [close encounters of the third kind] are LSD-like experiences in which a subject perceives a mixture of the real world and of her/his inner unconscious one.

I myself feel certain that accounts given by witnesses reflect what their senses have reported – that is, they do actually perceive humanoids, exotics, and so on. But if the six entity-types are indeed already in the collective unconscious, they are perhaps, therefore, already in some sense in the mind of the witness before his close encounter. If so, while perceptions of alien entities may well be stimulated in the witnesses by what can only be loosely called the UFO phenomenon, they only indicate that some kind of stimulus is present – they tell us nothing at all about the nature of that stimulus.

What is the truth behind stories of abduction by UFOs? See page 2086 for a startling theory





robot

exotic

apparitional

Left: artist's impressions of each of Alvin Lawson's six categories of alien. They are, from left to right, human, humanoid, animal, robot, exotic and apparitional. Lawson argues that these categories are actually archetypal: that they are somehow built into the human mind, awaiting only the right trigger to bring them to the conscious mind

The lie of the land

Is Glastonbury a giant zodiac, created in the distant past and linked to King Arthur's quest for the Holy Grail? PAUL BEGG ends his series on the mystique of Glastonbury with an account of how the zodiac was found, and assesses whether it could be real

WAS GLASTONBURY THE BIRTHPLACE of Christianity in Britain? This is one of the claims for its special significance, and the old stories of Joseph of Arimathea, the Holy Thorn and the Holy Grail take up this theme. Was Glastonbury the most important religious centre of pagan Britain as well? Celtic myths and archaeological evidence have been cited to this effect. Was Glastonbury one and the same place as Avalon, where the legendary Arthur was buried? A case has been made out for this proposal. Indeed, it is hard to ignore the Glastonbury mystique – and the notion of the Glastonbury zodiac is perhaps the most remarkable of the many beliefs about the special nature of this area.

As conceived by its modern discoverer, the Glastonbury zodiac is a circle 10 miles (16 kilometres) across and 30 miles (48 kilometres) around, with the Tor at its centre. The 12 signs of the zodiac are marked out on the ground as huge figures, in the same order in which the zodiacal constellations appear in the heavens. The giant effigies are shaped by roads, tracks, earthworks, rivers, pools and similar components. These are partly natural and partly fashioned by the ancients to fill in the details.

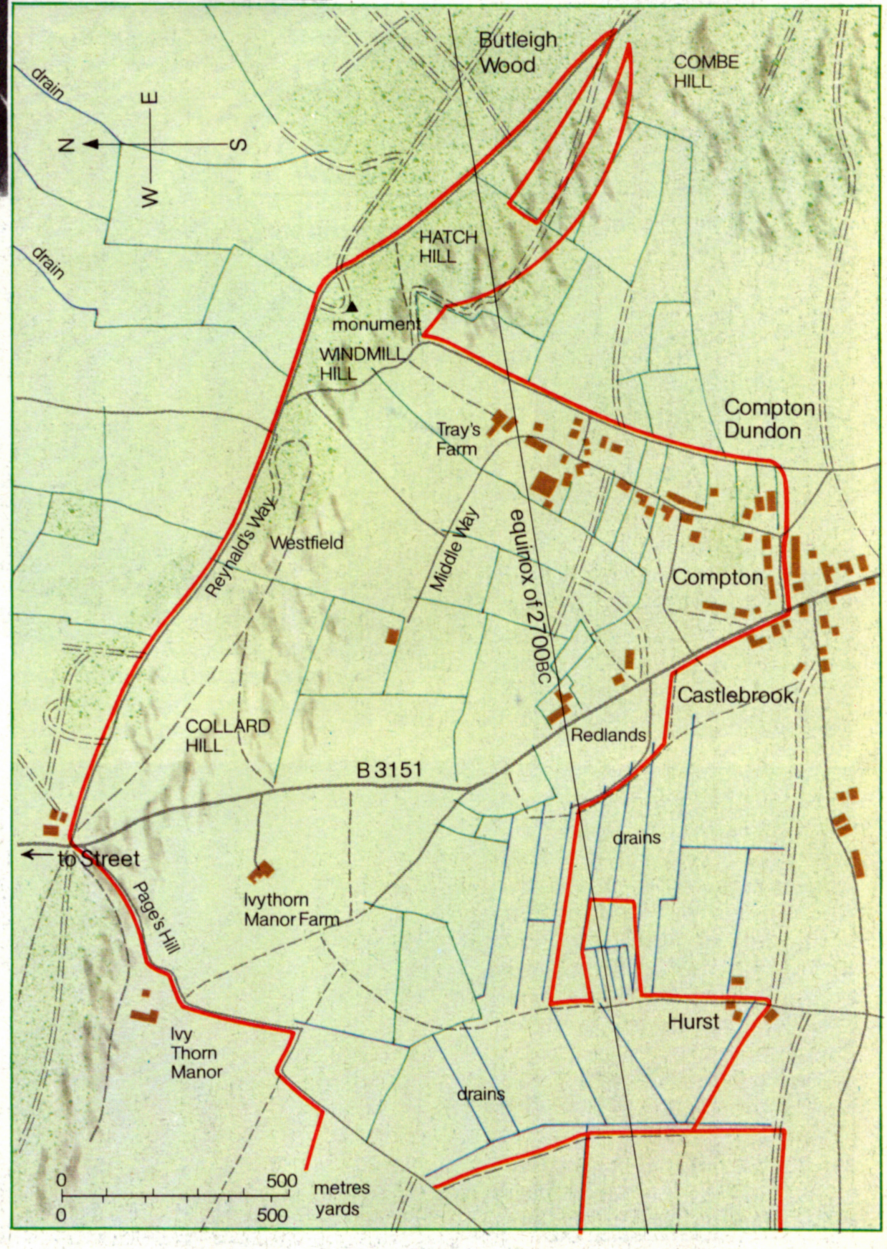
According to Anthony Roberts in his book *Glastonbury: ancient Avalon, new Jerusalem*:

> The key to the secrets of Glastonbury and the whole Avalonian complex lies within the contour of the landscape . . . . Millennia before the advent of the Celtic Druids (*c.* 500 BC) there existed at Glastonbury a race of men who shaped the whole terrain to form certain mystical and astrological patterns. In the mid 1920s these patterns were rediscovered through the single-minded researches of a brilliantly intuitive woman, Katharine Maltwood.

Katharine Maltwood's book on the subject, *A guide to Glastonbury's temple of the stars*, was published in the 1920s, but she was not actually the first to make such a connection. A zodiac was discovered at Glastonbury over 300 years earlier by John Dee, scholar, magician and astrological adviser to Queen Elizabeth I (see page 1970). In his biography of Dee, Richard Deacon says that Dee was interested in 'the prehistoric earthworks of

Right: Katharine Maltwood, the 20th-century discoverer of the Glastonbury zodiac, which she believed to have been created as a grand design thousands of years ago. She traced it out in the earth in a circle 30 miles (48 kilometres) in circumference, with Glastonbury Tor at its centre. Having come upon the zodiac while drawing a map for a book on the Grail quest, she related it to the characters of the Arthurian legend (left) as well as to the stars (below left). Mary Caine, who has carried on Mrs Maltwood's work, has made modifications in Capricorn, Scorpio and Libra

Below right: a detail of Taurus outlined on the Ordnance Survey map, as Mrs Maltwood saw it. This is one of the clearer examples of the star signs on the Glastonbury zodiac



the Glastonbury area and he had diagnosed that these objects when carefully mapped represented the signs of the zodiac and the stars'. In his diary Dee noted:

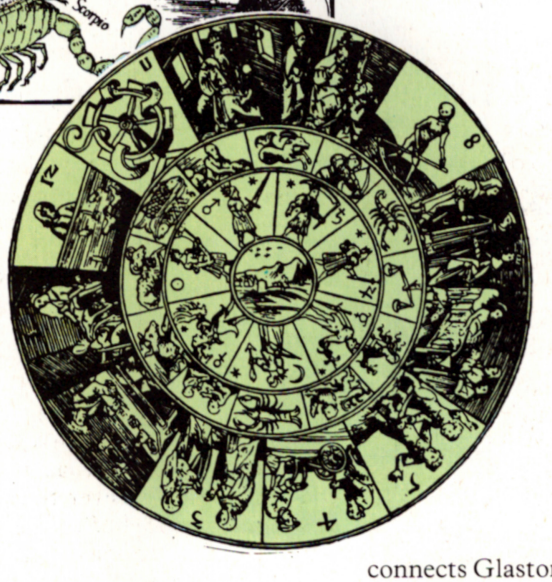
> The starres which agree with their reproductions on the ground do lye onlie on the celestial pathe of the Sonne, moon and planets . . . thus is astrologie and astronomie carefullie and exactley married and measured in a scientific reconstruction of the heavens which shews that the ancients understode all which today the lerned know to be factes.

Like Dee, Katharine Maltwood attached an astronomical significance to the Glastonbury zodiac, but she added a new dimension. She related the figures to incidents in the Arthurian Grail romances. 'It is around these archaic nature giants that the Arthurian legends accumulated,' she says.

Mrs Maltwood did not seem to have had a clear idea of how the zodiac was used, although she certainly believed that it had a function in the pagan ceremonies of the Celtic Britons. She saw it in some way related to the seasons and the position of the stars and planets, and she suggested that it might have been constructed in the hope that, through sympathetic magic, the heavens could be realised on Earth. In pre-Christian Britain, she says, stories were told about the figures of the Glastonbury zodiac. But with the coming of Christianity, those who had been initiated into the mysteries 'were obliged to couch their secret knowledge in romance . . . the pre-Christian stories of the stars were adopted by later chroniclers and interwoven with the Christian Grail legend.'

Accordingly, Katharine Maltwood visualises the zodiac as the original Round Table. Seated around it in the form of the zodiacal figures are Arthur, Gawain, Lancelot, Perceval, and other characters from the Grail legends. And within the figures are some of the places where various adventures in the Grail quest take place.

It has long been recognised that the Arthurian romances contain elements of various recollections of the primitive religions. John Darrah in *The real Camelot* says: 'The reality which underlies many well-known inhabitants of Camelot is not to be found in the meagre chronicles of the Dark Ages, but in the oral tradition which has remembered the cult figures from the heyday of native paganism . . . .' Darrah goes on to illustrate the many pagan themes in the Arthurian romances – the cult of the severed head, the



In the conventional zodiac, the signs are placed into 12 equal segments of 30° each (left: an illustration from a shepherd's calendar, probably of the late 15th century). A constellation zodiac such as the one at Glastonbury, however, shows the signs as occupying different amounts of space (top: a constellation zodiac by the German artist Albrecht Dürer, of about 1511)

tradition of priestly kings, the ritual relevance of copulation, castration, cannibalism, and much else. The Grail is often said to belong to this pagan scheme.

Katharine Maltwood became interested in Glastonbury in 1925 through an assignment to illustrate *The high book of the Grail*, which had just been translated into English from the French. Asked to draw a map of the itinerary of the Arthurian Grail quest, she began to travel and study the terrain around Glastonbury (Avalon) – and she came up with her startling theory about the zodiac and its relationship to the Holy Grail. Indeed, she herself says that the Glastonbury zodiac 'would never have been found had it not been for this history'. So it is worth taking a closer look at the book that influenced her.

The high book of the Grail in the original French is *Le haut livre du Graal: Perlesvaus*, most often simply called *Perlesvaus*. It was written by an unknown author at an unknown date, commonly believed to be in the first quarter of the 13th century, and describes the adventures of Perceval, Lancelot and Gawain in quest of the Holy Grail. In common with most of the Grail romances, it is full of obscure and complex symbolism – so much so that it is possible to read almost anything into it. However, the author claims that *Perlesvaus* was translated from a Latin record kept 'in the Isle of Avalon, in a holy house of religion that standeth at the head of the Moors Adventurous, there where King Arthur and Queen Guinevere lie'. This has been interpreted in the light of the Avalon-Glastonbury identification to mean Glastonbury Abbey. Through such interpretation of other material in the book, Katharine Maltwood came to believe that the unknown author possessed an intimate knowledge of the Glastonbury region and the zodiac.

In fact it is highly improbable that the Latin record cited by the author existed. It is now known that many medieval writers gave authenticity to their work by claiming that their tales were translations of, or drawn from, texts of some antiquity. For example, Geoffrey of Monmouth said that his *Historia regum Britanniae* ('The history of the kings of Britain') was a translation of an ancient book given to him by Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford. Chrétien de Troyes said that his *Le conte du Graal*, the earliest surviving Grail story, was based on a book given to him by Count Philip of Flanders. And Robert de Boron claimed that his poem *Joseph di Arimathie* was drawn from a 'great book' written by 'great clerks'. The author of *Perlesvaus* was therefore following an established literary tradition by citing a 'legitimate' source. It is also significant that he connects Glastonbury with Avalon and mentions that both Arthur and Guinevere were buried there. This clearly dates the composition of *Perlesvaus* as after the last decade of the 12th century when Giraldus Cambrensis was producing his work. For only Giraldus – and those who used him as their source – ever included the words 'with Guinevere his second wife' as part of the inscription on the cross in Arthur's presumed grave. Had any documents confirming the burial of Arthur at Glastonbury existed, and had they survived the great fire of 1184, surely the monks, Giraldus Cambrensis, and others would have referred to them to prove that the exhumation was genuine. As such documents are mentioned by nobody except the author of *Perlesvaus*, it is reasonable to assume that this Latin text did not exist.

It is impossible to say how much of

Perlesvaus is drawn from the body of popular French literature on Arthur and the Holy Grail or from Celtic myths, and how much was purely the author's imagination. Many interpretations of *Perlesvaus* can be valid. This fact hits very hard at the roots of Katharine Maltwood's use of this book for her 'rediscovery' of the Glastonbury zodiac.

Turning to the zodiac itself, it can be argued that Mrs Maltwood arbitrarily chose the tracks and other features that form the figures. For example, she disregarded some because she said that they were of too recent origin. Is it just coincidence that they also spoiled the outline of her zodiac? Yet she included others even though they were of even more recent date – and these just happened to help complete the design.

Francis King, an authority on modern occult groups and practices and the author of several books on the subject, says in his entry on the Glastonbury zodiac in the *Encyclopedia of the unexplained*:

> On a detailed map of any area, except perhaps a desert, it is perfectly possible to see zodiacs or Grail castles or anything else one wants to see. Just as a child may see exciting pictures of adventure in the glowing coals of a fire, or just as some 19th-century astronomers saw, and drew, complex patterns of 'irrigation canals' on the planet Mars, so the occultist sees meaningful symbols in the chance patterns recorded by the map maker.

Other writers have also expressed serious doubts about the Glastonbury zodiac. Geoffrey Ashe, a specialist in Arthurian studies, cites the enormous and incredible labour involved in constructing earthworks more than a mile (1.6 kilometres) long. Colin Wilson, an expert on the occult, expresses another reservation: '. . . the mere demonstration that the configurations of the land *could* be the signs of the zodiac is no convincing proof. I would need to be told precisely how the worshippers used the configurations in their religious ceremonies.'

The pagan content of the Arthurian and Grail legends dates back to a collection of myths that were linked into a broad system of belief. But this does not extend to anything as specific as stories about the figures of the Glastonbury zodiac. To link the zodiac with the Grail quest, we must believe that *Perlesvaus* – far from being a romance – is historically accurate as a record of very particular pagan beliefs. This strains credence too much. And if the Grail connection is eliminated, the Glastonbury zodiac is left without a function. Can we accept that the ancients would have carried out such a 'grand design' for no purpose?

Finally, there are those who point to Dee's discovery as substantiating evidence of a Glastonbury zodiac, saying that Katharine Maltwood rediscovered his zodiac. But this is not strictly true, for we do not know if Dee's zodiac is the same one as Mrs Maltwood's. Nor do we know why or how Dee worked out a zodiac at Glastonbury in the first place. Answer these puzzles and a new light may be shed on the whole business. After all, Dee's zodiac may have been different from Katharine Maltwood's – and Glastonbury with two zodiacs is more than anybody can accept.

The principal figures in the Arthurian quest for the Holy Grail are (anticlockwise from left) King Arthur, Gawain, Lancelot – seen with a hermit – and Perceval. Katharine Maltwood conceived the Glastonbury zodiac as a configuration of Arthur's round table, an idea inspired by the book she set out to illustrate. That romance, of course, regarded Glastonbury as the Avalon of Arthur's burial

Further reading

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A new field for Oldfield

Ever since its discovery, electricity has been hailed as a miracle healer – sometimes by charlatans, sometimes by genuine scientists. GUY LYON PLAYFAIR examines this long tradition, of which Harry Oldfield is one of the latest representatives

HARRY OLDFIELD'S electronographic scanning method (ESM) aroused considerable interest from practitioners of orthodox and 'alternative' medicine alike. Within two years of leaving his job as a science teacher Oldfield had been invited to give demonstrations at public and private gatherings all over Britain. An impressive feature of these demonstrations was the spontaneous diagnosis he usually gave for members of his audience. Some of them were given an outline of almost their entire medical history and present condition.

There is even some evidence that the ESM can locate *potential* disorders, although this is naturally difficult to prove. But an increasing number of biologists are coming to suspect that electrical processes can have a far more substantial effect on the workings of living matter than had previously been realised – whether in the division of a cell, the regeneration of a whole limb in some animals or, especially, in the origins of disease. It is conceivable, therefore, that dangerous electrical 'patterns' of some kind may direct the course of disease, and may be detectable before they produce their biological effects.

Above: at Harry Oldfield's home, a patient is examined by the electronographic scanning method (ESM), while Oldfield records the signal on a cassette tape recorder for later study

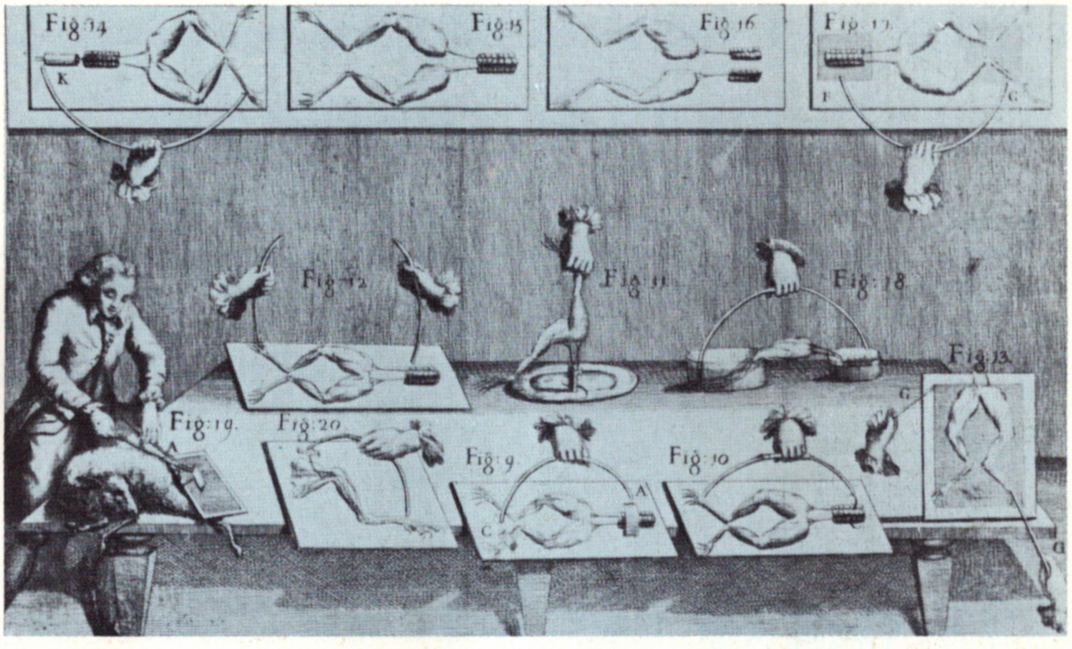
Below: after being treated with the ESM, Mrs Eileen McCormick experienced relief from discomfort caused by surgery. Her husband, Donald McCormick, also received treatment and found that his arthritis showed improvement

In many cases the doctor finds it as difficult to diagnose a disease as to cure it. For a potentially serious illness, the earliest possible advance warning is essential. To be able to diagnose a disease before its malign effects appear is every clinician's dream. Dr Malcolm Carruthers, who has watched Oldfield demonstrate the ESM, likens the present state of the technique to the primitive images produced by the first X-rays, which have now evolved into the coloured computer-generated X-ray images of today. Carruthers says of ESM:

> It is possible that it may pick up disturbances of the body's bioplasmic field [a hypothetical field associated with living matter] that precede disease. This is unproven, but it is definitely interesting and worth pursuing . . . . There's some distance to go, and Harry Oldfield is the pioneer in the United Kingdom in this field . . . .

Oldfield had not been using the ESM for long as a diagnostic device before patients began to tell him that they seemed to feel better after he had used it on them. They would ask for further appointments – for ESM therapy.

Donald McCormick, an author who also writes under the name Richard Deacon, was suffering from arthritic pains in his joints; he noted a 'marked difference' after his first session. After three sessions there was a substantial improvement. His wife Eileen was equally impressed. She had suffered four years of discomfort following a hiatus hernia operation; after three visits to Oldfield she declared: 'It has eased a lot, and I feel



Right: the link between electricity and life was established by Luigi Galvani around 1791. He found that the muscles of freshly killed frogs would twitch when he induced an electrical current to flow in the muscles' associated nerves. As scientific knowledge progressed, the crucial role of electricity in the functioning of the nervous system became clear. At the same time all manner of electrical 'cures' were invented and touted

generally stronger and get less tired.'

Sharon Saatchi, a beautician, had experienced painful muscular spasms in the back for several years, following a diving accident. After ESM therapy her opinion was that her condition was 'much better'. Other patients have reported improvements – sometimes occurring immediately – in a number of conditions ranging from sinusitis, high blood pressure and headaches to general feelings of being unwell. Oldfield's most satisfied patient may be Sharon Saatchi's dog. For some time it had been dragging a hind leg, in evident pain. After a single ESM session, which it seemed to enjoy, the dog scampered around the room with no sign of a limp.

The medical use of electricity and magnetism in various forms has a long history, in which both orthodox investigators and outrageous quacks figure. It dates back to Luigi Galvani's celebrated discovery in the 18th century that electric currents could cause muscular contractions. This led many to believe that electricity and the supposed 'life force' were one and the same thing. 'Electrobiology' enjoyed a considerable vogue in the 19th century. Items on the market included 'Dr Owen's Body Battery', 'the Electric Helmet' and all sorts of copper and zinc belts, corsets and bracelets. The latter are still widely used today.

The man who made therapeutic use of electromagnetism respectable was the French doctor Arsène d'Arsonval. In the 1890s he employed alternating currents oscillating at frequencies of up to about 30 million megahertz (30 million cycles per second); he believed such high-frequency currents had general therapeutic value. He was the forerunner of what is now called 'diathermy' – the induction of 'deep heat' in body tissues by radio-frequency currents, microwaves or ultrasound.

A New Yorker, Dr Abraham Ginsberg, is the man usually credited with the introduction of pulsed high-frequency electrotherapy (which has no heating effect). This has been used, allegedly successfully, since 1934 for treating wounds, muscular disorders, rheumatoid arthritis, sprains and even broken bones. Its practitioners claim that the technique helps damaged cells to heal themselves. It has been discovered that cells appear to be sensitive to certain very precise frequencies, pulse repetition rates and current strengths. These are known as 'windows'. As Dr Robert O. Becker of Syracuse, in New York state, USA, puts it: 'If you exceed the range, the cell will just sit and do nothing.' This technique is basically the same as Oldfield's, though he has developed it considerably.

The first scientist to devote most of his research career to studying life, health and

Below: two devices based on 'electrobiology'. The 'Electric Helmet' (left) consisted of a number of metal plates worn on the head, while the 'Body Battery' was a metallic belt. Similar devices, such as copper bangles, have been used for many centuries, suggesting that they afford real benefits; but if so, it is quite uncertain how they work

disease from the point of view of electromagnetism was Georges Lakhovsky. Shortly after the First World War he developed the theory that all life on Earth is a phenomenon created and maintained by electromagnetic radiation, chiefly that which occurs in cosmic rays. Most of this originates beyond the solar system and blends with that from the Sun to bombard the Earth.

Lakhovsky asserted that when the sunspot cycle is at its peak (see page 1870) the incidence of heart complaints and other diseases rises. He thought this was due to the solar activity interfering with the influx of cosmic radiation from beyond the solar system. And it is now known that when sunspots are at their peak the 'solar wind' of particles from the Sun increases in intensity and alters the composition of the cosmic radiation reaching the Earth – and therefore, Lakhovsky would say, the nature of the invisible sea of energy in which we all live.

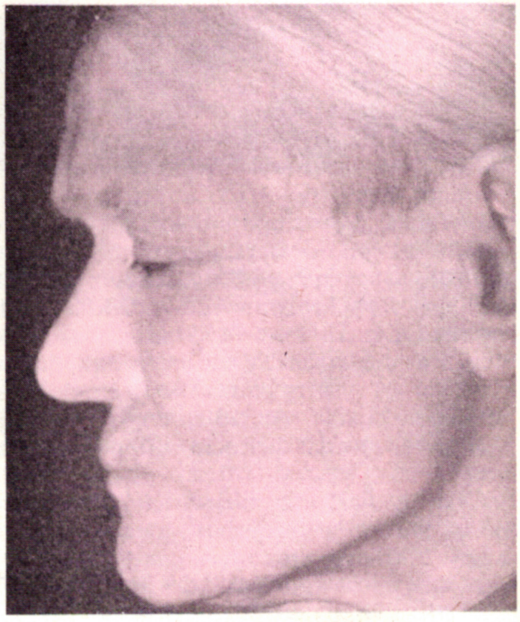
A war of radiations

'Disease,' said Lakhovsky, 'is a war of radiations.' And the battleground is the basic component of all living things – the cell. He believed that this was actually an electrical circuit, which both received and emitted radiation. One had only to upset the balance of this oscillation and disease would result.

In 1931 Lakhovsky brought out his multiple wave oscillator (MWO), a device that generated electromagnetic waves with frequencies ranging from the extremely low frequency band all the way up to those of visible light. By bombarding the body with all frequencies at once he hoped that the diseased area would absorb the appropriate one.

Lakhovsky and other independent researchers published details of several cases, complete with before-and-after photographs, in which the MWO had been used to treat a variety of skin ulcers, radium burns and tumours. One of the most remarkable cases was that of an 82-year-old woman who had been hideously disfigured by an epithelioma (cancer of the body's surface tissue) on her cheek that was almost as big as her ear. It had resisted radium therapy – which in fact made it worse – but completely disappeared after three weeks of MWO treatment, leaving the woman with a smooth cheek and looking years younger.

Lakhovsky also revived the 19th-century fashion for wearing copper belts and bracelets, which he regarded as miniature MWOs. In a well-documented experiment at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris, he inoculated six geraniums with tumour-forming bacteria and placed a single turn of copper wire around one of them. Five of the plants were dead within a fortnight; the one that had been encircled with the copper thrived and grew to an enormous height – and the tumour eventually withered and fell off.



A dramatic recovery from cancer, following treatment with the 'multiple wave oscillator' (MWO) of the French engineer Georges Lakhovsky. The first picture (above left) was taken on 25 April 1932 and shows a large tumour in the cheek of an 82-year-old woman. For three weeks she was treated with the MWO, and on 30 May the second photograph (right) was taken. Not only had the tumour gone, but her skin was smoother and younger

Harry Oldfield had never heard of Lakhovsky or the MWO when he designed his ESM equipment. It is essentially the same thing, however: a kind of radio wave spray gun that jolts every cell in the body – and jolts the unhealthy ones back to their normal state.

A London medical herbalist, Torben Nordal, has studied the ESM. He is conducting a research programme aimed at setting up a computerised data bank of the 'signatures' – the characteristic oscilloscope patterns – set up by particular diseases when the ESM is used. He regards the diagnostic value of ESM as 'established beyond the shadow of a doubt' and is now exploring possible therapeutic uses.

Harry Oldfield himself scrupulously avoids making specific claims for his technique. It is still at an embryonic stage, he insists – and it is a complementary therapy, not an alternative to conventional medicine.

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Guy Lyon Playfair and Scott Hill, *The cycles of heaven*, Pan 1979

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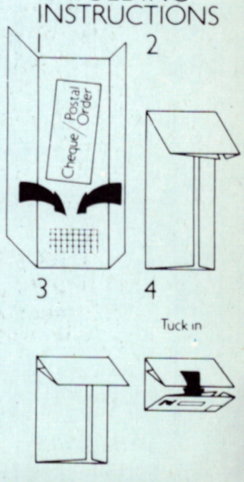

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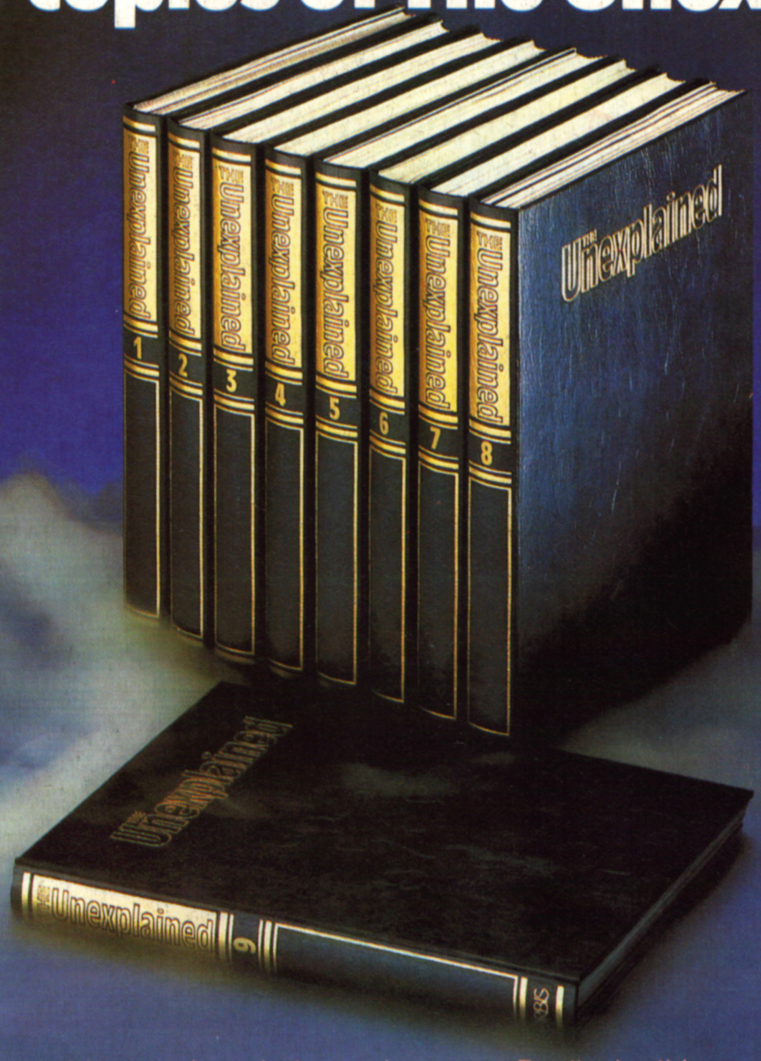

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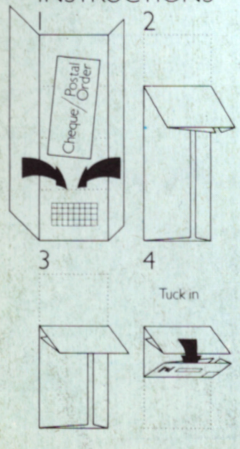

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